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of learned terms, or led to suppose that the science is a mystery known only to the initiated few.

*To the Editor of the Belfast Magazine.*

ON THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE  
POTATOE.

I PROMISED to send, from time to time, such articles as might strike me in the course of my reading. I have been lately reading a report of the committee of the board of agriculture, in London, concerning the culture and use of potatoes. Much of it is, to be sure, not new to Irishmen, who already are practically so well acquainted with the culture and use of this excellent vegetable; but I thought it might not be unacceptable to your readers to have some account of its history, and an analysis of its component parts; as the subject may probably be novel to most of them, and at least it must be acknowledged to be more interesting than the theatricals and other stuff, which so frequently fill the pages of your Irish contemporaries. I hope you will always aim to *instruct*. A READER.

*From the Communications of Dr. Wright, of Edinburgh, to the Board of Agriculture.*

*Solanum tuberosum*, Linn. *Specie plantarum*.

COMMON POTATOE.

History.....The potatoe is a native of America, and was well known to the Indians long before the conquest of Mexico and Peru. Gomara, in his General History of the Indies, and Josephus Acosta, are amongst the early Spanish writers who have mentioned the potatoe by the Indian names, *O Penanck*, *Papes* and *Papos*. Clusius, and after him Gerard, gave figures of the potatoe plant. Gerard was the first author who gave it the name *Solanum Tuberosum*, which Linnaeus and his followers adopted.

In 1584, Sir Walter Raleigh, so celebrated for his worth, his valour, and his misfortunes, discovered that part of America called *Novembega*, and by him Virginia. Whether the admiral was acquainted with the potatoe in his first voyage, or whether it was sent to him by Sir Thomas Grenville, or Mr. Lane, the first governor of Virginia, is uncertain. It is probable

he was possessed of this root about the year 1586. He is said to have given it to his gardener, in Ireland, as a fine fruit from America, and which he desired him to plant in his kitchen-garden, in the spring. In August this plant flowered, and in September produced a fruit; but so different to the gardener's expectation, that in an ill-humour he carried the potatoe-apple to his master. "Is this," said he, "the fine fruit from America, you prized so highly?" Sir Walter either was, or pretended to be, ignorant of the matter, and told the gardener, "since that was the case, to dig up the weed, and throw it away." The gardener soon returned with a good parcel of potatoes.

Gerard, an old English botanist, received seedlings of the potatoe, about the year 1590; and tells us that it grew as kindly in his garden as in its native soil, Virginia. The plant was cultivated in the gardens of the nobility and gentry, early in the last century, as a curious exotic; and towards the end of it (1684) was planted out in the fields, in small patches, in Lancashire; from thence it was gradually propagated all over the kingdom, as also in France.

In 1683, Sutherland has the *Solanum Tuberosum* in his *Hortus Medicus Edinburgensis*; and it is probable that many others in Scotland cultivated the potatoe in their gardens about that time. It was not, however, cultivated in open fields in Scotland, till the year 1728, when Thomas Prentice, a day-labourer, first cultivated potatoes at Kilsythe. The success was such, that every farmer and cottager followed his example. Thomas Prentice, by his industry had saved 200*l.* sterling, which he sunk for double interest, upon which he subsisted for many years, and died at Edinburgh, in 1792, aged eighty-six years.

Extract from an analysis of the potatoe-root, by George Pearson, M. D. F.R.S.

1. It appears from experiments, that 100 parts of potatoe-root, deprived of its skin or bran, consist of
1. Water, . . . . . 63 to 72
2. Meal, . . . . . 32 to 28

100 100

2. The meal consists of three different substances:

1. Starch or fecula, . . . . . 17 to 15
  2. Leafy or fibrous matter, . . . 9 to 8
  3. Extract or soluble mucilage, 6 to 5
- —  
32 28

3. The potatoe-root contains also potash, or vegetable alkali. By estimation, there were ten grains of it in its mild state from 1000 grains of the root; but as of these ten grains, not less than two and a half were carbonic acid, or fixed air, produced during burning, we cannot reckon the quantity of this alkali more than seven grains and a half in 1000 of the root; that is, three-fourths of a grain per cent.

4. The ashes of 1000 grains of potatoe-root, afforded also seven grains and a half, or three-fourths of a grain per cent, of substances not examined, but which are very probably the same substances afforded by the ashes of vegetable matters in general; namely oxide or calx of iron, and of manganese, phosphoric acid united to lime, magnesia and muriate of soda, or common salt.

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*For the Belfast Monthly Magazine.*

"EVERY THING DEPENDS ON THE MANNER."

*A Tale from the Spanish.*

A PAINTER of considerable ability in his profession, took up his residence in Toledo, with a prospect of making his fortune. His chief excellence consisted in painting on canvas; his works were admirable for the variety of the subjects, the correctness of design, the vivacity of his tints, and the freedom of his pencil; with all this he was poor. Whenever he had finished a painting, on the sale of which he reckoned with confidence, he exposed it to the view of the virtuosos, who loaded him with praises, crowds came to visit him, and heaped the starving painter with eulogiums; but their kindness terminated here; no person ever thought of demanding the prices of his *chef d'œuvres*.

In this situation of his affairs, ready to perish with hunger in spite of all his talents, he discovered that a Frenchman of his own profession, resided in the same neighbourhood; he

soon contrived to become acquainted with him, and discovered that this stranger, who contrived to pick up a decent livelihood, was possessed of but moderate talents, which he employed in sketching indifferent pictures, that cost him little trouble in the execution, and which he disposed of at a good price. His usual subjects were extracted from the history of Amadis of Gaul, St. George and the Dragon, St. Alexis or St. Ursula and her eleven thousand Virgins. The Spaniard soon became sensible of his error, in following his own taste, in preference to that of the public, and how much more beneficial it would be to him to conform to that of his customers; he profited by this reflection, and without persisting in the prosecution of his *chef d'œuvres* he set himself to work at compositions which might be more profitable, though less conducive to his reputation. There was not an honest peasant, around the country, who did not come to purchase from him, and the profits of this trade enabled him to subsist, while at his leisure he could apply himself to the painting of such pictures as might confer honour on his abilities, and which his independent situation secured him from disposing of under their value; he was grateful to the Frenchman for his advice, who frequently inculcated to him the maxim, "*Mon ami, tout depend de la maniere.*"

I shall add two instances more, to confirm the truth of this maxim... The first shall be brief; I have had it from Lopez de Vega. There was a farmer who, without ever learning to read or write, had, nevertheless, acquired a complete knowledge of the whole business of agriculture, but was withal so poorly instructed in the principles of his religion, that he could not even repeat by art, the apostolic symbols. The *Curé* of the parish on being informed of his state of ignorance, refused to administer the sacrament to him, till he had learned them correctly. The honest farmer, who anxiously wished to be extricated from this unpleasant dilemma, after many serious deliberations on the subject, at length hit upon the following means of recovering the favour of his *Curé*.

Within a short distance of his house